

## PLEASURE AND PAIN

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Both sets of feelings have played a leading part in evolutionary and ethical theories : they have. it is said. served us as guides for the avoidance of what is harmful and the embracing of what is useful. in the struggle for life. and in our conscious behaviour. These theories assume that the useful invariably excites pleasure and never pain. and that the harmful invariably excites pain and never pleasure. This assumption appears to outrun the facts. Generally. it is true. we eat wholesome food with pleasure. and dislike things which would disagree with us. But all human likings are certainly not to be classed as beneficial : some are indeed harmful beyond doubt. such as the passion for intoxicants or for gambling. and the depraved refinements of lustful desire. It is not only man's tastes that may be perverted. Sheep and partridges may become exceedingly filthy feeders : a New Zealand parrot has within recent years become carnivorous. There are plants. such as Venus's Fly-trap (Dionaea) and the Pitcher-plant (Nepenthes). which capture flies and feed upon them : but they appear to flourish equally well when this diet is denied them. The smell of putrid fish is to most men disgusting : yet to millions of mankind fish in this condition is an enjoyable article of diet. Many of our likes and dislikes are unconnected with utility or harmfulness. Why, for instance, does

the touch  
of slime repel us. the squeaking of a  
slate pencil  
set our teeth on edge ? Why are some  
persons  
uneasy if a cat is in the room ? Why  
are women  
so commonly frightened of a mouse ?  
An instinct  
or a feeling which interfered with the  
efficiency of  
an organism. would generally be  
eliminated in the  
course of evolution; but should, in the  
exuber-  
ance of Life's activity. instincts or  
feelings arise  
which are neither useful nor harmful,  
which may